Calendar No. 419

99TH CONGRESS
1st Session

SENATE

REPORT
99-189

AUTHORIZING THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION TO PLAN AND CONSTRUCT FACILITIES FOR CERTAIN SCIENCE ACTIVITIES OF THE INSTITUTION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

NOVEMBER 19 (legislative day, NOVEMBER 18), 1985.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. MATHIAS, from the Committee on Rules and Administration, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H.R. 1483]

The Committee on Rules and Administration to which was referred the bill (H.R. 1483) to authorize the Smithsonian Institution to plan and construct facilities for certain science activities of the Institution, and for other purposes, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with an amendment and recommends that the bill as amended do pass.

PURPOSE

The purpose of H.R. 1483 is to authorize the construction of facilities for two scientific research installations of the Smithsonian Institution: the Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory in Arizona and the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama. The bill authorizes the appropriation of $4.5 million for the Whipple Observatory and $11.1 million for the Tropical Research Institute, effective October 1, 1986.

At the Whipple Observatory, a new base camp will be constructed, replacing a base camp in an abandoned school building that is inadequate, unsafe, and unsanitary. The new camp will be closer to the actual observatory in a National Forest. The new base camp will be on the same side of the Santa Cruz River as the observatory, and the observatory will, therefore, not be subject to being cut off from its support facilities by floods and the washing away of bridges as has been the case several times recently.

At the Tropical Research Institute, a laboratory and conference center will be constructed adjacent to the existing library and administrative headquarters at Tivoli; a field laboratory will be constructed on Barro Colorado Island to replace the existing structure

71-010 O

5683-8

which is decaying and which no longer meets basic building or health code requirements; and, at Galeta Point, a laboratory and a 15-person dormitory will be constructed.

BACKGROUND

The Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory.—The Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory is located on the summit of Mount Hopkins, an 8,550-foot peak about 35 miles south of Tucson, Arizona, an area long recognized as a superior location for astronomical observations because of its clear air and relatively low light pollution. The Smithsonian operates several telescopes on Mt. Hopkins including: the Multiple Mirror Telescope, the third largest telescope in the world and the first of its kind, combining six 1.8 meter telescope mirrors in a common support structure to produce the light gathering capability of a conventional 4.5 meter telescope; a 10 meter reflector for observations of high-energy gamma rays from celestial sources; and 1.5 meter and 61 centimeter telescopes for optical and infrared observations of distant stars and galaxies. The observatory is a major astronomical research facility that is used by approximately 90 scientists each year for a wide variety of research projects. In addition, the site attracts hundreds of visitors each year.

Because of the lack of space on the summit itself, operation of the telescopes is supported from a separate base camp. The current base camp consists of two adjacent parcels of land totaling approximately 4.25 acres, a small one-story abandoned school building, a one-story house (both the school and the house date from the 1930's), and a fenced gravel area, with some open sheds and some trailers, where equipment and vehicles are stored and repaired. The owners of the site of the current base camp have indicated their desire to sell the property. Because the location is subject to being cut off from the mountain by floods and bridge washouts and because of other inadequacies, a new site should be developed.

The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute.—The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI), located in the Republic of Panama, is the principal U.S. center for the study of tropical biology. Each year hundreds of Americans and international researchers join the permanent staff at STRI in undertaking fundamental studies of the tropics. The STRI facilities consist of buildings that were built in the 1920's and 1930's, renovated buildings obtained from the U.S. military; and renovated structures obtained from the Republic of Panama. Construction materials used in the first half of this century have proven to be quite vulnerable to the ravages of the high humidity and insect infestation of the area. Except for a new library opened in 1984, the buildings are inadequate, unsafe, and unsanitary, and require extensive maintenance.

COMMITTEE ACTION

On July 24, 1985, the Committee on Rules and Administration held hearings on S. 581, the companion measure in the Senate to H.R. 1483. Testimony was received from the Honorable Barry Goldwater, a Senator from Arizona; the Honorable Robert McCormick Adams, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution; Mr. Dean W. Anderson,

Under Secretary, Smithsonian Institution; Dr. David Challinor, Assistant Secretary for Science, Smithsonian Institution; Mr. Tom L. Peyton, Director, Office of Facilities Services, Smithsonian Institution; Dr. Ira Rubinoff, Director, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute; and Dr. Irwin Shapiro, Director, Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory. All of the foregoing testified in favor of the bill. No statements in opposition to the bill were received.

COMMITTEE FINDINGS

Based on submitted information, the testimony of witnesses, site visits to the Whipple Observatory by staff members of the Committee on Rules and Administration, and information received informally from staff members of the House Committee on House Administration who visited the Tropical Research Institute in Panama, the Committee on Rules and Administration finds that the facilities that will be authorized by H.R. 1483 are necessary to the safe, efficient, and effective conduct of the scientific research carried out at the Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory and at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT

The Committee on Rules and Administration amended the amount of $11.2 million in H.R. 1483 as referred, to $11.1 million in H.R. 1483 and S. 581 as introduced, on advice that the change was the result of clerical error.

COST ESTIMATE

An estimate of the cost of S. 581, the Senate companion measure to H.R. 1483, prepared by the Congressional Budget Office, follows:

U.S. CONGRESS,
CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE,
Washington, DC, October 29, 1985.

Hon. CHARLES McC. MATHIAS, Jr.,
Chairman, Committee on Rules and Administration, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the attached cost estimate for S. 581, to authorize the Smithsonian Institution to plan and construct facilities for the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory and the Tropical Research Institute, as ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration on October 29, 1985.

Should the Committee so desire, we would be pleased to provide further details on this estimate.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

ERIC HANUSHEK
(For Rudolph G. Penner).

CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE—COST ESTIMATE

1. Bill number: S. 581.

2. Bill title: To authorize the Smithsonian Institution to plan and construct facilities for the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory and the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute.

3. Bill status: As ordered reported on October 29, 1985.

4. Bill purpose: The purpose of this bill is to authorize appropriations for the Smithsonian Institution. This bill is subject to subsequent appropriations action.

5. Estimated cost to the Federal Government:

(By fiscal year, in millions of dollars)

	1987	1988	1989
Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory			
Authorization level outlays	4.5		
Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute			
Authorization level	11.1		
Estimated outlays	1.6	4.5	5.0
Total authorization levels	15.6		
Total estimated outlays	2.2	6.4	7.0

The costs of this bill fall in budget subfunction 503.

Basis For Estimate: The bill authorizes specific amounts in fiscal year 1987 for the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory and Tropical Research Institute. Full appropriation of the authorization level is assumed in this estimate. Outlays are based on historical spendout rates for construction.

6. Estimated cost to State and local government: The Congressional Budget Office has determined that the budgets of state and local governments would not be affected directly by the enactment of this bill.

7. Estimate comparison: None.

8. Previous CBO estimate: None.

9. Estimate prepared by: Bernadette Costello and Deborah Kalcevic (226-2820).

10. Estimate approved by: C.G. Nuckols for James L. Blum, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.

REGULATORY IMPACT

Pursuant to paragraph 11(b) of Rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the Committee on Rules and Administration does not consider that enactment of H.R. 1483 would have any regulatory impact.

CHANGES IN EXISTING LAW

H.R. 1483 makes no changes in existing law.

○